

# Work in the Key of Life

*Third-agers seek deeper meaning and social contribution • by Nell Porter Brown*



But she persevered, knowing it was the right path for her. “The thing I heard at my last class reunion was that we are all probably living longer than our parents did,” she says. “We can do lots of things in life and it’s important to remain open to different things at different times.”

Piltch has created what’s increasingly known as a “Third Age” or “encore” career. The Third Age concept, which originated in France and is popular in Europe, refers to that expanding period in the human life cycle after middle age and before old age. In the United States, that stage is currently populated by the baby boomers, many of whom, surveys show, intend never to “retire” as their parents did.

Instead, many are seeking more meaningful occupations later in life, says career/life coach Margaret Newhouse, M.A.T. ’65, a pioneer in the field of “Third-Age life crafting” and founder of the Life Planning

Network. At a time when life’s traditional goals have been reached—children are grown, mortgages are paid, career duties have lessened, and the pressures of worldly accomplishment have receded—there is more flexibility for people to explore what else life has to offer, and what else they can offer of themselves. “You have more freedom in an actual sense,” Newhouse adds. “But more importantly, I think, is a psychological freedom that comes with age—having a greater perspective on what’s important in life and a willingness to just be that person—without regard to what other people think. For many, there is a newfound spiritual element involved.

“IF ANYONE HAD told me that I was going to become a reiki master teacher,” says Cynthia Ann Piltch ’74, “I would have said, ‘There’s a better chance of the pope becoming Jewish.’ I am a scientist. The idea of healing arts was just so alien to me.”

Most of Piltch’s working life was spent as a public-health researcher, first in the upper levels of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and later as a specialist in women’s health, the topic of her doctorate. But in 2005, at the age of 52, Piltch made the decision to curtail that

**Above: Massage is among the healing arts Cynthia Ann Piltch studied for a new career.**

career and focus on integrative mind-body therapies.

She now spends her days performing many forms of massage on clients, along with reflexology, craniosacral therapy, myofascial release, and reiki, a Japanese form of hands-on energy healing, which she also teaches. “I withstood a lot of challenges when I went back to school for massage therapy [in 1999],” says the Lexington, Massachusetts, resident. “People actually said things like, ‘You have such a fine mind, why don’t you want to use it?’ One person’s reaction was, ‘You will be the most educated prostitute I know.’ It was extremely hard to hear those things.”



## today at canyon ranch

A busy mom let herself be taken care of for a change, read a book (with no interruptions!), had the best massage of her life and promised herself more moments like these.

*This Is Your Moment.*  
888-288-3850

### SHARE THE RANCH AND SAVE

When two guests who have never been to a Canyon Ranch health resort share accommodations at Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Arizona, or Lenox, Massachusetts, each saves 15% on the all-inclusive vacation of a lifetime.\* Simply mention "Two New, Too Terrific" when you reserve your stay. 888-288-3850

\*Valid through June 30, 2011. Some restrictions and blackout dates apply.

**CANYONRANCH.**  
*The Power of Possibility.*

LIFE ENHANCEMENT RESORTS | tucson, arizona | lenox, massachusetts  
HOTEL & SPA | miami beach

wellness | fitness | spa | medical | nutrition | [canyonranch.com](http://canyonranch.com)

## HARVARD MAGAZINE SPECIAL SECTIONS

*Insider offers and exclusive listings for our readers.*



[www.harvardmagazine.com/specialsections](http://www.harvardmagazine.com/specialsections)

You're likely to be much less egoistic."

For encore-career participants, money is less of a motivator than enjoyment, "staying active and productive," and a desire to contribute to society, according to a recently published study by the Families and Work Institute in Manhattan and the Sloan Center on Aging and Work at Boston College. The number of older workers is also on the rise; the study found that 75 percent of workers who are 50 or older expect to have "retirement jobs" in the future.

Civic Ventures, a San Francisco think-and-do tank that promotes encore careers for the social good, found in a 2008 survey that 9.5 percent of people between 44 and 70 were already engaged in such work—and another 44.7 percent were interested in it. "That's about 40 million people," half the roughly 80 million baby boomers, says Civic Ventures executive vice president Jim Emerman '72. "Our belief is that if we can provide the work that this group wants, then we are talking about a huge infusion of talent to address social problems."

Civic Ventures defines encore careers as those that combine "continued income, personal meaning, and social impact." In addition to conducting research on the topic, the organization has a fellows program, started in 2009 and expanding nicely, through which former corporate employees are paid a stipend and matched for a year with nonprofits in need of their expertise. The interest in this, from both potential fellows and nonprofits, is far beyond what Civic Ventures can currently provide, and Emerman says there is hope of finding ways to scale up the program.

For now, he says the goal is to expand to include 150 to 200 fellows by the end of 2011. This effort might soon include a Boston component run by Discover What's Next, a Newton, Massachusetts-based organization also focused on third-age occupations. "We're looking at the largest demographic in society, in terms of the boomers," Emerman adds, "and if even a small portion of those people decide to use this period of time to work on issues that are important to them—working with youth, in education, community outreach, or healthcare—instead of seeking freedom from work, then it's a huge wind-fall for society."



FOR THOSE seeking change in their third-age work lives, the inevitable risks and rewards are often impossible to foretell. "What's fun about the process of deciding what else you want to do in life is when people really discover new pieces of themselves—or pieces that have been dormant for a long time," says Cambridge career counselor Phyllis R. Stein '63, Ed.M. '70.

She specializes in career changes and has helped Piltch, whom she first met as an undergraduate, at various transitions along the way. "This is an exciting thing to do," adds Stein, who made her own difficult decision, at 55, to leave her post as director of the Radcliffe Career Services Office after 21 years to open a solo practice. "It can also be scary and challenging. Making these changes at later ages takes a lot of motivation and persistence."

Anita P. Hoffer '61, Ph.D. '69, describes her own moves—out of academia, and then corporate business development—to her longstanding passion as "a leap of faith." "I was afraid of failing, of crashing and burning, of social disapproval, of burning bridges in my professional life and not being able to go back," she says. "Those are the risks." With a background as a scientific researcher at Harvard Medical School, she had most recently been negotiating multimillion-dollar contracts between university researchers and pharmaceutical companies. "It was fascinating to be working with brilliant scientists and sponsoring important research, but it gets awfully dry and contentious," Hoffer says. "We are a litigious society and we express our worry about outcomes through thinking about where the comma should go in a contract. But finally I decided life was too short to do that anymore."

At 67, the Brookline, Massachusetts, resident went back to school to get a doctorate in sexology. She now lectures on sexual behavior, attitudes, and literacy, runs women's workshops, and counsels private clients, with a special focus on older women. She also continues to conduct research, recently surveying Radcliffe alumnae for a forthcoming paper on "The Sexuality Profiles of Women between 60 and 75." "I've never looked back—lord, no!" she says of her decision to change occupations later in life. "I am



## Hammond Residential



**Cambridge...**Renovated single family in East Cambridge. Visit [www.136Thorndike.com](http://www.136Thorndike.com). 3 brs, 2 baths, delightful yard and parking. \$850,000



**Cambridge...**A private estate on Professor's Row near Harvard. Newly renovated by Copley Design & Development. Visit [www.63FrancisAvenue.com](http://www.63FrancisAvenue.com). \$4,250,000



**Cambridge...**Spacious SF near campus, Porter T, and Mass. Ave. restaurants. DR/LR w/fp; 3 beds + 2 studies, 2.5 baths; 3rd fl deck; yard and patio. \$799,000



**Cambridge...**Minutes to Davis Square, "Churchill Square" condos feature deeded parking, separate yards/decks, open floor plans, central air & much more. \$415,900-\$697,000



**Cambridge...**Classic condo with 3 bedrooms, 2 baths near Harvard Observatory. Granite, stainless steel, marble, hardwood. Parking. \$619,000



**Belmont...**An exquisite 12-room renovated Queen Anne with beautiful gardens. Newer kitchen. Original detail. A wonderful marriage of old and new! \$1,795,000

**[www.hammondre.com](http://www.hammondre.com)**

Cambridge, Belmont, Watertown & Somerville  
Residential, Commercial, Rentals & Property Management  
Cambridge Office 617-497-4400 • Belmont Office 617-484-1900

so much more alive now than I was. And I am giving back; I can't tell you how many people thank me for helping them!"

Hoffer sees her change as a return to a

longstanding interest in sex and reproduction; her first doctorate is in anatomy, her thesis adviser was a spermatology specialist, and for years she ran a lab that

did research on male infertility in order to find a way to develop a male birth-control pill—"For political and legal reasons, I can tell you it ain't going to happen," she quips—before she "got siphoned off" into the corporate world.

But it took internal strength to build on her original interest and earn another advanced degree from what she calls a "non-traditional, non-Harvard program" at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in California. "For me, it was about courage and daring to take a chance," she says. "It was not your typical career pursuit, so I worried about people raising eyebrows—and some have. But they have come around because they see that I love what I am doing—I'm enough of a rebel to be drawn to this topic—and I'm helping people with a topic that many consider taboo."

Many resources, including professional support, exist for what can seem a monumental decision (see sidebar). Numerous books are published on the specific topic

## GUIDES TO THE THIRD AGE

**Becoming a Life Change Artist:** *Seven Creative Skills That Can Transform Your Life*, by Fred Mandell

**Chapters:** *Mastering Change in Life and Work*, by Candice Carpenter

**Composing a Further Life:** *The Age of Active Wisdom*, by Mary Catherine Bateson

**Flow:** *The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

**Getting Unstuck**, by Timothy Butler

**In The Third Chapter:** *Passion, Risk, and Adventure in the 25 Years After 50*, by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot

**Opening the Eight Gates of Wisdom**, by Angela Arrien

**Slow Love:** *How I Lost My Job, Put on My Pajamas, and Found Happiness*, by Dominique Browning

**The 4-Hour Workweek**, by Timothy Ferriss

**The Mature Mind:** *The Positive Power of an Aging Brain*, by Gene Cohen  
**The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work**, by Alain de Botton  
**Your Life as Art**, by Robert Fritz

## WEBSITES

**Harvard Business School:** [www.advancedleadership.harvard.edu](http://www.advancedleadership.harvard.edu)

**Civic Ventures:** [www.civicventures.org](http://www.civicventures.org) and [www.encore.org](http://www.encore.org)

**University of Connecticut:** [http://continuingstudies.uconn.edu/professional/non-profit/emerging\\_leaders/instructors-el.html](http://continuingstudies.uconn.edu/professional/non-profit/emerging_leaders/instructors-el.html)

**Discovering What's Next:** [www.discoveringwhatsnext.com](http://www.discoveringwhatsnext.com)

**Margaret Newhouse:** [www.passionand-purpose.com](http://www.passionand-purpose.com) and [www.lifeplanningnet-work.org](http://www.lifeplanningnet-work.org)




*Romance!*

*Why wait for Valentine's Day?*

*Indulge tonight*

8 Holyoke Street, Cambridge, MA  
617-497-5300 • [www.sandrines.com](http://www.sandrines.com)



Cadbury Commons  
AT CAMBRIDGE


Retirement Community  
Assisted Living

**What Do Harvard Alumni  
Have in Common?**  
**Cadbury Commons**  
*An Uncommon Senior Residence*

The Harvard alumni who chose Cadbury Commons may have retired from work, but not from life. The difference is people—those who live here and the staff that serves them. Our programs will engage your interests, our professional staff is sensitive to your needs.

Call (617) 868-0575 to arrange a personal tour,  
or visit [www.cadburycommons.com](http://www.cadburycommons.com)

66 Sherman Street, Cambridge,  
MA 02140 • (617)868-0575



INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL OF  
BOSTON  
PRE-K – 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

**OPEN HOUSE**

FOR PRE-SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN  
FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM

SATURDAY, JANUARY 8, 2011  
9AM - 1PM  
17 IRVING STREET, ARLINGTON, MA

INTERNATIONAL MINDSET  
INDIVIDUALIZED ATTENTION  
INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGING

617-499-1459  
[www.isbos.org](http://www.isbos.org)

Accredited by NEASC, the French Ministry of Education, the Council of International Schools and the International Baccalaureate Organization.



of later-life occupations, and workplace psychologists, such as Timothy Butler, director of career development programs at Harvard Business School (and author of *Getting Unstuck*), offer assessment tools ([www.careerleader.com](http://www.careerleader.com)). The University also runs the interdisciplinary Advanced Leadership Initiative, which was begun in 2009 and is chaired by Arbuckle professor of business administration Rosabeth Moss Kanter. The fellowship program prepares seasoned leaders in their third age to take on new challenges in the public social sector.

Newhouse and Stein, along with Kit Harrington Hayes, author of *Managing Career Transitions*, take a holistic approach to helping older people find work that's aligned with new or long-buried values. For Hoffer, the possibility of this third-age career entailed "generativity and finding my voice." No career choices should be made in a vacuum, Newhouse says, especially those in later life. "Deal with all

facets of your life: health, relationships, finances, and how other passions relate to work—or not," she advises. "Some people jump into wanting a job without doing this other piece of soul-searching first. The primary lens through which to look at this time in life is really possibility, not loss or challenge," but it's also critical to keep in mind that "Life is short and getting shorter the older I get!"

EVEN AFTER soul-searching has helped someone determine that a career switch is desirable, and ideas about what field or job to pursue are in play, serious obstacles can arise: particularly the weak economy and age discrimination. "I'm not discouraging people from trying to make a career change; I just want them to be very realistic about what it's going to take on their part," Stein says. "Competition is incredible."

In a tight job market, when employees are expected to do more with less, employers are less willing to take a chance on

newcomers to a field, or on those whose skill sets do not precisely match their criteria, Stein says. "People over 50 need to understand the concerns of employers—that older employees are going to cost more, be sick more, not going to be as up to date with technology, not learn as fast," she says. "It behooves career-changers to address these fears in their presentations." Meanwhile, those who decide to hang out a shingle face their own set of challenges.

Stein encourages people to identify what's truly motivating them. "What does a career change really mean about your life? What do you want from working? Is this the aspect of life to change, or is something else making you unhappy?" she asks. Examine everything you have done in life and analyze carefully what brought fulfillment and why. "Look for a thread, if there is one," she advises. "It's important to identify what you want work to give you. Whether you do this thinking intuitively or methodically, it has to be a planful process."

## PREMIER PROPERTIES

### 1913 ELEGANT GEORGIAN BELMONT



- Elegant living with exquisite period detail
- 9' ceilings, 6 fireplaces, original natural woodwork
- Tastefully renovated with all modern conveniences
- 11 rooms with 5 bedrooms & 3.5 baths
- Large landscaped yard, deck & 2-car garage
- Walk to town center & new Wellington Elementary School



**Barbara Carrier**

Call: 617-593-7070

[Barbaracurrier@comcast.net](mailto:Barbaracurrier@comcast.net)

RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE Web site: [BarbaraCarrier.com](http://BarbaraCarrier.com)  
171 Huron Avenue • Cambridge, Mass. 02138

### ELEGANT OFFICE CONDOMINIUM STEPS FROM THE HARVARD CLUB



Meyer & Meyer designed Commonwealth Avenue office blends Old World charm with high speed internet access. Beautifully appointed 1570 square foot unit in the Windsor Place building is ideal for a professional practice or client services firm. Private entrance on Comm Ave, kitchen, library, conference room, direct access to Harvard Club parking. \$659,000 buys a unique opportunity to make a lasting impression.



**Paul Araujo,**  
**Clarendon Companies**  
617-267-8000

### Hammond Residential Real Estate



Jeffrey Dodge Rogers ©

#### West Cambridge

This gracious 1903 Queen Anne with income potential, is located in a desirable neighborhood, just north of Brattle Street. Rehabbed in 2010, the main house offers 5 bedrooms and 4.5 baths. There is a separate entrance apartment with 2+ bedrooms and 2 baths. 6 fireplaces. Certified lead free. New systems. Expansive deck, and beautifully landscaped grounds. New garage.

*By appointment Only • \$3,850,000*

Carol Kelly & Myra von Turkovich  
Vice Presidents, ABR  
[carolandmyra@hammondre.com](mailto:carolandmyra@hammondre.com)  
[www.hammondre.com](http://www.hammondre.com)  
617.497.4400

[carolandmyra.com](http://carolandmyra.com)

**HARVARD**  
MAGAZINE

If you would like to list a property in our March-April issue, contact Abby Williamson: 617.496.4032

# POSTCARDS FROM NEW ENGLAND

Visit us online for exclusive getaway offers for *Harvard Magazine* readers.



## IRVING HOUSE

24 Irving Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
617-547-4600  
[www.cambridgeinns.com](http://www.cambridgeinns.com)

*"Earth friendly, people friendly accommodations in the heart of Cambridge." Passes to Wellbridge Fitness Center included for each guest booking from Harvard Magazine. Rates include: breakfast, off street parking and Wi-Fi.*



## LIBERTY HOTEL

215 Charles Street  
Boston, MA 02114  
617-224-4000  
[www.libertyhotel.com](http://www.libertyhotel.com)

*Located at the foot of Boston's historic Beacon Hill, The Liberty Hotel is a blend of history, high-style luxury and hometown warmth—the ideal place for a quintessential Boston experience.*



## TAJ BOSTON

15 Arlington Street  
Boston, MA 02116  
617-536-5700  
[www.tajhotels.com/boston](http://www.tajhotels.com/boston)

*Located in Boston's Back Bay on the corner of Arlington and fashionable Newbury Street, Taj Boston is the crown jewel of Boston hotels.*



## BOSTON HARBOR HOTEL

70 Rowes Wharf  
Boston, MA 02110  
617-439-7000  
[www.bhh.com](http://www.bhh.com)

*With its dramatic archway and distinguished architecture at Rowes Wharf, the Boston Harbor Hotel is a landmark hotel on the waterfront. Experience pampering service, exceptional cuisine and accommodations where every room has a view.*



## THE CHARLES HOTEL

One Bennett Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
800-882-1818  
[www.charleshotel.com](http://www.charleshotel.com)  
on Twitter @CharlesHotel

*The Charles Hotel is The Smart Place to Stay. It is a modern interpretation of New England hospitality with a thriving jazz club, two signature restaurants, state of the art conference facilities, and a location in the heart of Harvard Square.*



## CANYON RANCH IN LENOX

165 Kemble Street  
Lenox, MA 01240  
800-742-9000  
[www.canyonranch.com](http://www.canyonranch.com)

*At award-winning Canyon Ranch health resort in Lenox, escape to tranquility, health, natural beauty and hundreds of unsurpassed services and activities in the heart of the Berkshires.*

## NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL SECTION

For both Piltch and Hoffer, third-age careers are outgrowths of their primary careers and of long-standing interests that they felt freer to pursue later in life. "We have focused our attention on a subset of what we were doing," Piltch points out. She wrote her dissertation on gender and workplace stress, for example, and had always been interested in the mind-body connection. But she did not seriously discover the deep benefits of massage therapy until a car accident in 1995 left her severely injured, unable even to sit down for six months. It was a painful, often discouraging recovery period, but she emerged more open to the possibilities of alternative modes of healing not only for herself, but for others. One of her main career goals now is to try to figure out how to better bring complementary medicine to those who cannot afford it. In a way, she is still engaged in public health: "I'm promoting individual and community wellness."

Piltch founded the Radcliffe Mentor Program in 1983 and still advocates finding fellow alumnae and alumni who are doing what you want to do and talking with them, or even shadowing them at work. She also cautions people to be realistic about time commitments and financial needs. "My husband jokes with me that he thought I could never find anything more downwardly mobile than public health—but I did!" she says, with a laugh. "To be totally honest, I don't know if I would be doing what I do if I were living solo." (But she is quick to add that she feels wealthy whenever she is helping someone regain function or teaching others about tools that support wellness.)

Hoffer says her finances were sufficiently stable for her to return to school and pursue her passion, though "I'm never going to get rich doing it." But that doesn't seem to matter. "My favorite quote is from Anaïs Nin," she says: "'And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight inside the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.' I didn't know," she adds, "that making a change would deepen my understanding of myself and also free me up to help women. I was aware of the risks that come with change—but these are the joys." ♥

For special offers, visit [harvardmagazine.com/postcardsNE](http://harvardmagazine.com/postcardsNE).

To advertise, contact Abby at [abigail\\_williamson@harvard.edu](mailto:abigail_williamson@harvard.edu), or at 617-496-4032.